

LEGAL AID
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Legal Aid WA Strategic Plan 2022 - 2024

Acknowledgement of Country and People

Legal Aid WA acknowledges First Nations people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we deliver our services. We pay our respects to all members of First Nations communities and their cultures, and to Elders past, present, and emerging.

Legal Aid WA acknowledges the Cover Art

The artwork featured on the cover was created by Gary Njamme for Legal Aid WA's Blurred Borders. In Gary's words:

“the red background is the ground. The circle in the middle represents the place, community, the Kutjunga area, meaning “all together as one”. The outside symbols represent both men and women leaders. When people are having arguments, they’re the ones that calm things down, stop things. It also means teaching the right way to do things and listening to our leaders. Sharing knowledge, ideas, and mungari-food. The food in this picture is there because when you eat bush food you feel good about yourself. Itaringki – bush passion fruit and bush tomatoes, when you travel along the roads here you see lots of bush tomatoes.”

Message from the Chairperson

I am pleased to present Legal Aid WA's new strategic plan.

Legal Aid WA's services are making Western Australia safer, fairer and more inclusive. Our goal is to see that the law protects everybody regardless of poverty or disadvantage. We're working toward a future where every Western Australian understands their legal rights, has ready access to legal advice, and is equal before the law.

This strategic plan is the start of a new chapter in providing improved access to justice. The plan builds on the hard work and successes of the last three years and sharpens our resolve to continually strive for improvement.

With the needs of the community being so complex, diverse and multi-faceted, it is vital that Legal Aid WA plans for excellence. Without a plan, agencies simply drift and react to the pressures of the day. This new strategic plan serves as a roadmap for the next three years. It sets out our vision and purpose, as well as the key result areas and strategic priorities and actions that will guide our efforts.

The needs of our clients are paramount, and this plan puts clients at the centre of everything that we do.

The plan arises from a series of situational analysis focus groups and workshops that led to a planning day involving both Commissioners and managers. It was also important that we involve staff in shaping the future of Legal Aid WA. The 45 actions in this plan are directly informed by our consultations with staff and our key stakeholders.

Legal Aid WA's new strategic plan focuses on five key result areas:

- 1) excellence in service delivery;
- 2) client access;
- 3) justice system impact;
- 4) organisational sustainability; and
- 5) stakeholder partnerships.



These key result areas lay the foundations for us to:

- Anticipate and respond to emerging trends;
- Focus on early interventions, prevention and diversionary pathways;
- Drive holistic, integrated, wrap-around support for clients beyond their legal problem;
- Implement the First Nations Strategy;
- Enhance strategic partnerships with key stakeholders;
- Optimise the allocation of resources to ensure financial sustainability;
- Drive process and technological transformation to improve efficiencies;
- Invest in our organisation's capability and wellbeing;

It is an ambitious plan. It has to be so, because demands are great and the challenges are substantial. It is a time for boldness for there is much to do.

I thank all of those involved in developing the plan and look forward to being a part of this exciting journey over the coming three years.

I know that we are up to the challenge.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'J. Crisford'.

Hon Jane Crisford SC

Chair

Legal Aid Commission of Western Australia

About Us

WHERE JUSTICE HAS A VOICE

Legal Aid WA has one plain but powerful purpose: to see that the law protects all Western Australians regardless of poverty or disadvantage.

WHY WE'RE HERE

We're working toward a future where equal justice is a reality for every West Australian. Every day and in every region, Legal Aid WA improves the lives of people experiencing disadvantage. Our work saves homes, keeps families together, gives children a better chance in life, prevents wrongful convictions, helps people living with a disability get support, reduces the over-representation of First Nations people in the justice system, protects older people from abuse, helps victims escape domestic violence, recovers stolen wages, and keeps people from walking away from their right to a fair outcome. Our steadfast presence around the State promotes trust and confidence in our justice system. We're making Western Australia safer, fairer and more inclusive.

WHO WE ARE

We're a statutory body set up under the *Legal Aid Commission Act 1976 (WA)*. We deliver a range of high quality, life-changing, legal assistance services through 10 offices, 16 Virtual Offices, and 53 outreach locations. As well as our in-house services we can call on the skills of 471 private lawyers across the State. We deliver holistic services that treat the client and not just the legal problem. We aim to provide services that are appropriate, joined-up, culturally safe, targeted, and timely. We're funded by the Western Australian Government and the Australian Government.

Overview

Our community is changing. An ageing population, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic are creating new vulnerabilities. We are increasingly concerned about adverse justice outcomes for First Nations people, violence against women, and the impact of mental health and disability on life outcomes.

Clients remain at the centre of the way we deliver services at Legal Aid WA. With a focus on innovation, holistic services, and prioritising services that tackle emerging areas of disadvantage, Legal Aid WA plays a leading role in ensuring access to the justice system. We're also helping to divert people away from the justice system where their offending may relate to an underlying social problem, and in particular, seeking to reduce the over-representation of First Nations people in the justice system in Western Australia.

As we tackle these problems, we do so in partnership with our colleagues across the legal assistance sector, including the Aboriginal Legal Service, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, Community Legal Centres and Law Access. Together, we are working with State and Federal Governments to develop a shared strategy for the sector, and are committed to ensuring that our work is aligned, efficient and effective.

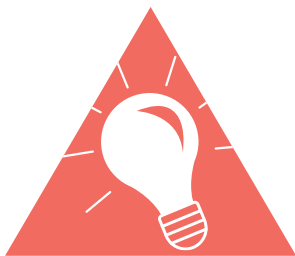
We will:

- Foster collaboration and support across the legal assistance sector;
- Be innovative problem solvers;
- Target our services to groups experiencing vulnerability;
- Widen the reach of our services in the regions;
- Use innovation and technology to increase access to justice;
- Identify early intervention opportunities;
- Provide high-quality legal education and resources for practitioners and the community;
- Increase our support to private practitioners delivering legal aid;
- Be a trusted partner for government in relation to legal service delivery in Western Australia; and
- Be an employer of choice, representative of the diverse community we serve, and a training ground for future leaders.

Emerging trends for the legal assistance sector

There are several major emerging trends for the legal assistance sector which will influence and shape Legal Aid WA's strategic positioning and response. This strategic plan should be read in the context of these major emerging trends:

1. Increasing concern about disproportionate justice outcomes for First Nations people.
2. An ageing population.
3. Perceptions of delays in the Family Court.
4. Ongoing concern about men's violence against women and women's access to justice.
5. The challenges of climate change.
6. A renewed emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness due to increasing levels of government debt.
7. An increasing community and government expectation for connectivity across government service delivery agencies.
8. The continuing potential for technology to be a major influencer in how services are delivered, and organisations operate.
9. A slowing in labour supply growth relative to population growth that will impact access to skills and talent.



Vision

Equitable access to justice to support a fair, safe, and strong community



Mission

To provide quality, timely and holistic help to those who need our legal assistance

Core Values

Making a difference

We're committed to helping people understand and protect their rights

Client-centred

We put clients at the centre of everything we do

Respect

We care about our clients and the community in which we live

Innovation

We're committed to continuous improvement

Transparency

We are an open and accountable organisation

Key Result Areas

To deliver on our vision and mission we have identified five key result areas where we expect to demonstrate and be accountable for high levels of performance. These key result areas are outlined below with brief descriptors of success by the end of 2024.

Key Result Area 1 Excellence in Service Delivery



How we will define success by end 2024:

- ✓ Regional services delivered at the same level as metropolitan services
- ✓ Relevant and appropriate services delivered
- ✓ Proactive early interventions

Key Result Area 2 Client Access



How we will define success by end 2024:

- ✓ Culturally safe for all, including CALD, First Nations, LGBTIQ+, and people living with a Disability
- ✓ Regional services delivered at the same level as metropolitan services
- ✓ Omni-channel access provided
- ✓ Services prioritised for those most in need
- ✓ Wider access to services through an expanded means test

Key Result Area 3

Justice System Impact



How we will define success by end 2024:

- ✓ Joined up and complementary services
- ✓ Contribution to the efficiency of the courts
- ✓ Collaboration with other legal assistance providers, including the Aboriginal Legal Service, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, Community Legal Centres and Law Access
- ✓ Contribution to reducing the over-representation of First Nations people in the justice system

Key Result Area 4

Organisational Sustainability



How we will define success by end 2024:

- ✓ Significant progression of the digital transformation program
- ✓ Financial sustainability and accountability
- ✓ Business processes optimised and automated
- ✓ Employer of choice with high levels of staff wellness and talent retention
- ✓ Strong relationships with the private profession

Key Result Area 5

Stakeholder Partnerships



How we will define success by end 2024:

- ✓ Joined up and complementary services
- ✓ Active participation in legal assistance strategy development and implementation
- ✓ Collaboration with other legal assistance providers, including the Aboriginal Legal Service, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, Community Legal Centres and Law Access
- ✓ Collaboration with other government agencies
- ✓ Collaboration with other non-legal service providers

Strategic Priorities and Actions

In the context of emerging trends in the legal assistance sector and to fulfill our strategic positioning, we have identified eight strategic priorities for the next 3 years. These strategic priorities will be enacted through a series of actions and initiatives which will be implemented over the three-year period. These actions will be implemented through the Commission's annual business planning process and be actively monitored by the Commission management team over the course of each year.

Strategic Priority 1

Anticipate and respond to emerging trends and issues

Over the three-year period 2022-24 we will:

1. Identify government, community, and industry priorities through stakeholder engagement.
2. Create a whole of organisation approach to collaboration and knowledge sharing to inform delivery of holistic and targeted services.
3. Enhance our internal research and data analysis capability to identify and respond to emerging issues and trends, including the ageing population, family violence, and the over-representation of First Nations people in the justice system.
4. Actively seek out opportunities for new funding to support emerging issues.
5. Explore opportunities for restorative justice practices.

Strategic Priority 2

Focus on early intervention, prevention and diversionary pathways

Over the three-year period 2022-24 we will:

1. Develop a Children & Young People strategy, including community legal education, social support, legal assistance, and law reform.
2. Expand dispute resolution services.
3. Lead the development of high-quality legal education programs and resources targeting priority client groups including people with disability; people with mental health issues; CALD; LGBTQIA+; First Nations people; children and young people; seniors and aged; women and people experiencing homelessness.
4. Use innovation and technology to reach more clients and resolve disputes earlier.
5. Work with our partners to promote the safety of families experiencing family violence by providing early intervention services, including education, social support, and legal advice to FVRO respondents.
6. Partner with government and other stakeholders on reforms that aim to divert people with underlying social needs from the justice system.

Strategic Priority 3

Drive holistic, integrated, wrap-around support for clients beyond their legal problem

Over the three-year period 2022-24 we will:

1. Develop an integrated social support model to improve outcomes for our clients.
2. Grow social support services for our clients, ensuring best practice standards are met and the support is integrated with all service delivery.
3. Expand the use of 'legal health checks' across the agency to address client needs.
4. Collaborate with external partners, including the Aboriginal Legal Service, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, Community Legal Centres and Law Access, to enhance referral pathways.

Strategic Priority 4

Implement the First Nations Strategy

Over the three-year period 2022-24 we will:

1. Establish a cultural governance framework with an external First Nations reference group which includes First Nations staff working in other agencies.
2. Develop First Nations best practice service delivery standards in consultation with our external First Nations reference group.
3. Review Legal Aid WA policies to promote First Nations employment and retention.
4. Ensure Legal Aid WA leaders, supervisors and managers receive training on cultural awareness to ensure a culturally responsive workplace.
5. Actively pursue funding and allocate resources in pursuit of First Nations Strategic Plan actions.
6. Provide ongoing cultural awareness training for staff and service partners, including panel practitioners.



Strategic Priority 5

Enhance strategic partnerships with key stakeholders

Over the three-year period 2022-24 we will:

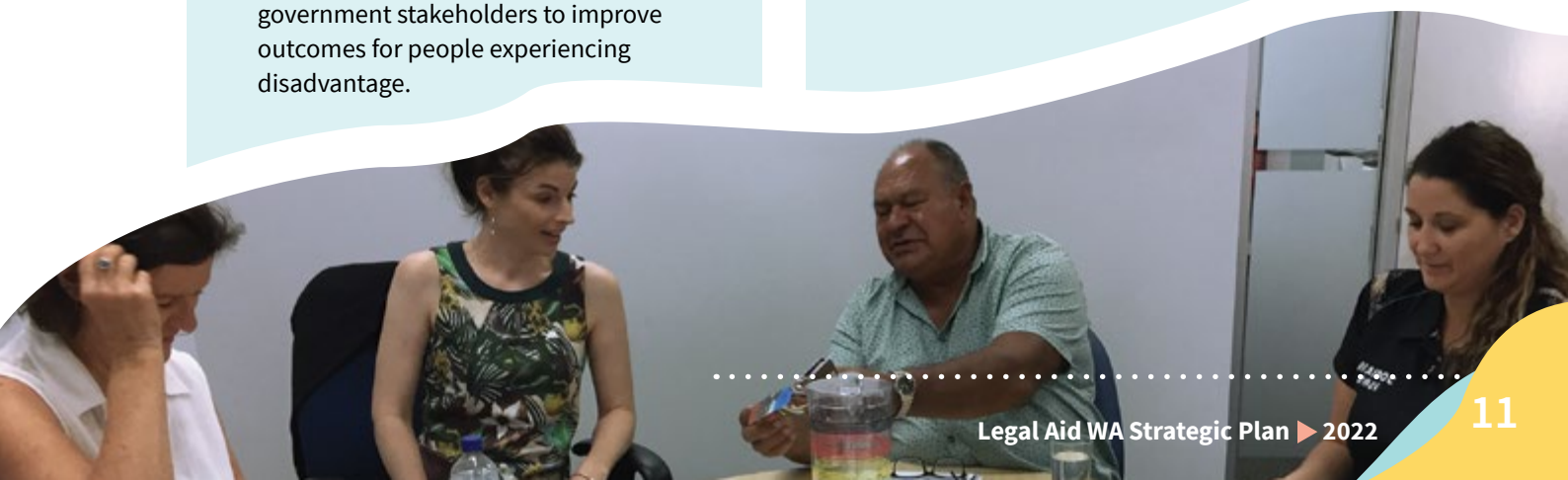
1. Embed a regular dialogue with the Department of Justice (including the Legal Assistance Branch, Strategic Reform Division, Court & Tribunal Services and Corrective Services) and Department of Treasury to link our priorities, identify opportunities and anticipate cost pressures.
2. Actively participate in the development and implementation of Western Australia's Legal Assistance Sector Strategy, in collaboration with the Aboriginal Legal Service, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, Community Legal Centres and Law Access.
3. Further develop our strong working relationships with courts and tribunals across Western Australia to improve access to justice for our clients and help build a stronger justice system.
4. Increase overall support to panel practitioners, including increasing the hourly rate and improving access to professional development and wellbeing opportunities.
5. Work with metropolitan and regional communities to deliver collaborative service initiatives, including health/justice partnerships.
6. Establish an innovation reference group with other government and non-government stakeholders to improve outcomes for people experiencing disadvantage.

Strategic Priority 6

Optimise the allocation of resources to ensure financial sustainability

Over the three-year period 2022-24 we will:

1. Develop a financial plan over the forward estimates period to identify trends and respond to cost pressures early.
2. Develop and implement a formal collaborative approach to business planning and its integration with budgeting and reporting.
3. Improve our data collection and analytical capability to ensure our service planning is evidence-based.
4. Review our eligibility guidelines for grants of aid to align with our strategic priorities.
5. Complete a review of our 'mixed model' of service delivery to ensure the balance is right between in-house lawyers and panel practitioners.
6. Establish an evaluation framework to monitor and review the performance and cost of new services and programs.



Strategic Priority 7

Drive process and technological transformation to improve efficiencies

Over the three-year period 2022-24 we will:

1. Develop a technology roadmap to guide the prioritisation, funding, and resourcing of digital transformation initiatives.
2. Develop architecture principles to guide technology decisions.
3. Finalise the procurement of, and significantly progress the implementation of a contemporary client, grant, and legal practice management system.
4. Transition to the Microsoft 365 platform.
5. Transition existing systems to cloud services.
6. Address the Business Process Review (2019) recommendations and review other processes to identify opportunities for improvement.
7. Redevelop the Legal Aid WA website.
8. Improve outreach to regional and metropolitan Western Australia, including through our Virtual Office network.

Strategic Priority 8

Invest in our organisation's capability and wellbeing

Over the three-year period 2022-24 we will:

1. Implement the Legal Aid WA Wellness Strategy.
2. Promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace with reference to the First Nations Strategy; the Disability Strategy; and the PSC Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy.
3. Develop, implement and evaluate an Employee Engagement Strategy.
4. Increase support to panel practitioners through improving access to professional development and wellbeing opportunities.
5. Establish an organisational governance framework.





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